



City of Duluth Communications Office

Mayor Emily Larson
411 West First Street • Duluth, Minnesota 55802 • www.duluthmn.gov

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DATE: 9/25/2023

SUBJECT: City of Duluth provides update on its response to rain event

BY: Kelli Latuska, Public Information Officer

City of Duluth provides update on its response to rain event

[DULUTH, MN] **Monday, September 25, 2023, 4:00 PM** Officials from the City of Duluth, along with officials from community partners Saint Louis County and the Western Lake Superior Sanitary District (WLSSD), provided an update on the response to the heavy rain event over the weekend at a press conference today. Four inches of rain fell in 24 hours in the Duluth area on Sunday, causing streams, rivers, and creeks to overtop onto roadway and trail surfaces, causing road closures and sanitary sewer overflows.

“The good news is, damage to infrastructure appears to be minimal in this event,” said Jim Benning, Director of Public Works and Utilities for the City of Duluth. “Our crews are still out investigating and assessing damages to culverts, bridges, and roadways, but our Street Maintenance crews are cleaning up and rectifying issues as they come across them and things are looking good so far.”

Nine roadways were closed yesterday due to water overtopping the roadways, but are now open. Some areas may still have cones around hyperlocalized damages, but those roadways are open and navigable now. Graders and gravel trucks are out repairing gravel road damage, and sweeper operations will begin tomorrow to clean up washout materials. Because the western side of Duluth had fewer flooding occurrences, the west Duluth Street Maintenance crews are able to team up with the eastern Duluth crews to assist them in repairing damages.

Regarding stormwater infrastructure, creeks, streams, and rivers have receded to normal levels as of this afternoon. Benning also reported very few undermined culverts, with only a couple in the far eastern boundaries of Duluth. Additionally, Hartley Dam is in good shape and served downstream residents well in flood mitigation and stormwater retention.

Four sanitary sewer lift stations, located at 22nd Avenue E near the lake, 60th Avenue E near the lake, Dodge Street, and Lift Station 6 near the Corner of the Lake also experienced overflows yesterday. Utility Operations staff report that all lift stations are now pumping regularly.

The City's Park Maintenance staff are also out assessing damage to parks and trails caused by the storm. Their assessments will take a few days longer to complete, due to the remote nature of some properties and due to the saturation of soils, many are still submerged.

The City's parks and trails system received moderate flood damage, with more of the balance of damage done in eastern Duluth parks and trails. Initial reports show that most damage is done to trails and bridges that were nearby larger stream and creek watersheds due to the large amount of water that overtopped those trails and bridges. Trail users are asked to refrain from using any natural surface trail until the trail has had a chance to dry out more fully to prevent further damage to the saturated soils.

"The City of Duluth will submit damage data to our partners at the County in the case that our storm damages can be reimbursed by the State," said Duluth Fire Chief and Emergency Manager, Chief Shawn Krizaj.

"The response of our staff and our partners at the County and WLSSD is unparalleled," said Duluth Mayor Emily Larson, "and I am so proud of the work they do to keep our residents safe and healthy in these natural disaster events. The level of collaboration and cooperation and the purpose these people bring to their work everyday is amazing."

An excessive amount of water fell in this rain event, causing area streams, rivers, and creeks to run much faster than normal and to be, in some cases, exceedingly dangerous. In weather events like these the City of Duluth asks residents to stay away from all standing water and moving water. Do not attempt to approach streams, rivers, or creeks to capture photographs while conditions remain dangerous. Stay away from areas that appear to be flooding or overtopping. Turn around, don't drown. Stay away from any manhole covers that may have dislodged due to potential health and safety concerns. Standing water can be very dangerous and can mask depth and hazards under the water, so please turn around rather than drive through it.

If you come upon flooding while driving, please call 911 to report it. Manhole cover disruptions and minor flooding issues can be reported to Public Works and Utilities via our 24-hour emergency hotline by calling (218) 730-4000.

Crews will continue to assess and clean up/repair damage and issues as the rain event over the coming days, and residents can also report issues they see by using the Resident Problem Reporter, found here: [v https://rpr-duluthmn.hub.arcgis.com/](https://rpr-duluthmn.hub.arcgis.com/)

Thanks to Duluth Public Works and Utilities, Duluth Police Department, and Duluth Fire

Department for their work in this flooding event. Additional thanks to the National Weather Service in Duluth, Saint Louis County, and WLSSD.

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